

VZCZCXRO0653
RR RUEHRG
DE RUEHRI #0541 2611458
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181458Z SEP 07
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4147
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0529
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 5045
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 3333

UNCLAS RIO DE JANEIRO 000541

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: RIO DE JANEIRO'S "OPERATION TWO FACES" RESULTS IN MAJOR
ARRESTS OF CORRUPT MILITARY POLICE

¶1. (U) Summary. Rio de Janeiro state officials announced a major sting operation which resulted in the arrests of 52 Military Police officers from a single police battalion yesterday. The officers are accused of involvement in a police corruption ring whereby they were on the payroll of drug traffickers. The arrests are part of "Operacao Duas Caras" (Operation Two Faces), and the end result of a 7-month long investigation into this particular battalion. This is Rio's largest arrest of police officers from within the same battalion to date, according to Military Police officials. More arrests are expected to follow as further evidence is collected.
End Summary.

Operation Two Faces -----

¶2. (U) Fifty-two Military Police (PM) officers from Rio de Janeiro's 15th Battalion, nearly 10% of the battalion's total police force, were arrested yesterday and charged with taking bribes from drug traffickers in exchange for providing police protection and avoiding police operations in certain areas. The officers allegedly accepted weekly bribes of as high as US\$2,000 from the drug trafficking gang of "Parada Anglica" which controls the Imbari area of Caxias.

¶3. (U) Rio de Janeiro State Secretary for Public Security Jos Mariano Beltrame stated that the large-scale arrest will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the level of policing in the area of Caxias where the 15th Battalion is based. However, he pledged his continued commitment to rooting out police corruption in Rio - both among the Military Police and the Civil Police forces, which share responsibility for law enforcement in the state. Rio de Janeiro Governor Sergio Cabral commented on the operation from his travels in Rome, stating that his government would no longer tolerate police corruption.

¶4. (U) This not the first time that the Military Police 15th Battalion has come under fire. In March 2005, in response to a top-down effort to clean up its ranks, officers decapitated a person and threw the head into the battalion headquarters as a warning. The next day, 11 Military Police officers from the 15th Battalion terrorized the inhabitants of that area killing 29 innocent people, in what is considered the largest massacre in Rio de Janeiro history.

Institutional Rivalry Among Rio's Police Forces -----

¶5. (U) In Brazil, public security falls under the responsibility of the state government. The two branches of state police are the Civil Police and the Military Police. Rio's Civil Police has a squad of 9,000 and is primarily involved with post-crime procedures such as investigating crimes and gathering evidence for prosecution. Rio's Military Police (a civilian force which follows a military command structure) currently has around 38,000 active officers, divided up among 40 battalions across the state to maintain order on the streets and conduct law enforcement operations.

¶16. (U) These recent arrests are sure to ignite institutional tensions between the two state police forces, which have a long historical rivalry, especially since this operation was the result of a Civil Police investigation. Police corruption among both forces is a problem, however, although Operation Two Faces has so far been focused exclusively on corruption within the Military Police. An emergency meeting between the two force commanders to diffuse tensions, convened by the State Secretariat for Public Security, is expected later in the week.

¶17. (U) Comment. Police corruption has been a long-standing problem in Rio de Janeiro. From the relatively low-wages that Rio police officers earn (the second lowest in all Brazilian states) to the high level of danger they face on a daily basis (arguably, the most violent work conditions), Rio police are relatively easy targets for drug traffickers' influence. Many police officers supplement their meager incomes by working with Rio's drug traffickers -- supplying contraband weapons, running drugs themselves, or providing protection. Several previous government administrations have attempted to tackle Rio's police corruption, but the underlying problem of officers being paid too little to tackle too big and dangerous an enemy remains. According to government statistics, 553 Military Police officers have been expelled since 2005 - leaving Rio with a diminished police force to confront a growing public security problem. In the run up to the July 2007 Pan Am Games, media-savvy Governor Cabral made public security one of his top priorities and was successful in obtaining federal troop support to augment the state's forces. Now that the media spotlight associated with the Games has faded, we will see how seriously Cabral tackles the underlying problems such as police corruption which continue to challenge the state. End Comment.

¶18. (U) This message was cleared/coordinated with Embassy Brasilia.